

NEW TRAINING COMPETENCIES FOR TODAY'S JUNIOR LEADER

BY

COLONEL WILLIAM J. WANOVICH
United States Army

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

NEW TRAINING COMPETENCIES FOR TODAY'S JUNIOR LEADER

by

Colonel William J. Wanovich
United States Army

Dr. Anna Waggener
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

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Today's junior leader will report to a new unit, deploy, and almost immediately face the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq or Afghanistan. Up to this point, the junior leader has received programs of instruction (POI) through the Army Reserve Officer Training Course (ROTC) and the branch officer basic course (OBC), which focus on tactical training and basic officership. However, the junior leader lacks formal training and an in depth understanding on leader competencies necessary to operate in the VUCA environment. To quickly adapt to a constantly changing enemy or to solve the complex problems the junior leader will face each day, they must be trained and educated in critical thinking and creative leadership skills. To effectively communicate and operate in the VUCA environment, the junior leader must have the language proficiency and acumen for the culture where Army units will operate. Time for training these additional competencies is not available during ROTC and branch OBC instruction. The Army must identify and better utilize all of the opportunities and periods of time when junior leaders can conduct these additional training competencies.

NEW TRAINING COMPETENCIES FOR TODAY'S JUNIOR LEADER

It is very likely that a new college graduated cadet will pin on Second Lieutenant bars and, at some point in the future, attend a 4-6 month branch officer basic course (OBC). That new junior leader will then show up to a new unit that is either in the process of getting ready to deploy or resetting from a recent deployment in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment of Iraq or Afghanistan.

Most cadets enter commissioned service through the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point. Cadets will meet the standards of the Army's approved and directed training and course requirements, otherwise known as a program of instruction (POI), to successfully graduate and take an officer commission.¹ Once graduated, these new junior leaders will follow a POI at a branch OBC before reporting to an initial duty location. The Army has to take a critical look to determine if each junior leader has been provided with the right training, education, leadership development, tools and opportunities that it will take to be effective in the VUCA environment of Iraq or Afghanistan. The POIs in ROTC or USMA, along with the POI during branch OBC are focused to ensure that junior leaders have mastered the tactics, can apply the appropriate amount of lethality, and are capable of safeguarding America's sons and daughters that they are responsible for leading, and therefore have little flexibility to add training for new junior leader competencies.

In the fight and decentralized nature of our current counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, these new junior leaders must receive the appropriate amount of training so that they have a thorough understanding in the culture and language in the countries

where they will deploy, patrol, fight, secure, and build. Training must be provided so that young leaders are able to use critical thinking skills, adapt to the complex problems in the COIN fight, and solve the problems in these environments using creative leadership skills. Junior leaders must have these skills before arriving at the first duty location because they have the responsibility to ensure that the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and Soldiers in the units that they lead, have been trained and understand these same skills and competencies in the VUCA environment where Army units are deployed.

At some point before deploying, junior leaders must have a true understanding of Security, Stability, Transition and Reconstruction Operations (SSTRO). They must be well versed in dealing with the economics, governance, and religious aspects in the towns that U.S. Army units will secure, how to use money as a weapon, how to negotiate, and how to influence religious and town leaders. More than the gun battles of the past, today's junior leader must develop an additional set of skills that enhance critical thinking and creativity, promote an understanding of foreign culture and allow for proficient language communication, in order to be more effective.

It may seem like the Army is asking a tremendous amount from the "freshly out of college" 22 year old junior leader, but this is the decentralized environment that the military currently operates. The junior leader cannot always rely on higher level commanders and leaders from the company and battalion to deal with the daily, "on the spot" complex problems that are happening in each section of every town. Junior leaders must have a thorough understanding of the environment and how the mission of their unit contributes to the higher level mission. With the responsibility, junior leaders

must be given the authority from higher level commanders and leaders, to act in their absence.

Understanding the importance in training junior leaders in the new competencies of critical thinking, creative leadership, language proficiency, and cultural training, presents the problem for the Army to find dedicated periods of time and training opportunities that will allow junior leaders to learn these competencies that will make them more capable leaders on the battlefield. Applying mandatory course completion requirements while cadets are still in college is one possible solution. Making use of the time available between graduation from college and entry to an initial training course could be an additional solution. Finally, during those periods between deployments where unit leaders find themselves taking care of the housekeeping chores of garrison, is another period of training time that could be used more effectively. These possible solutions will be discussed in more detail and deserve further study by the Army.

This paper begins by focusing on some of the differences that junior leaders face compared to those that were faced by their battalion and brigade commanders, who were the junior leaders during the Cold War era. It examines some of the training challenges the Army has in a decentralized organization and how those challenges require a change that impacts the training and leader development of the Army's junior officers, specifically as it applies to training on critical thinking, creativity, and the importance of language and cultural proficiency. Finally, the paper includes a discussion on opportunities when training competencies can be accomplished, given the currently full POIs during ROTC, USMA and the branch OBC.²

Junior Leader Challenges and the Difference in the Enemy, the Fight and the Threat.

The junior leader of today has many different challenges than today's battalion or brigade commander faced as junior leaders during the Cold War over 20 years ago. Instead of the linear battlefield and force on force of U.S. and NATO battalions, brigades, divisions, and corps stacking up against the Warsaw Pact enemies of the USSR, East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, squad leaders, platoon leaders and company commanders in the 21st Century are in a 360 degree, house to house fight with insurgents, terrorists, foreign fighters and disgruntled, unemployed youth in places like Mosul, Iraq or Khost, Afghanistan. In these places, and many others throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, the terrain is the town, and the enemies are mixed into the population. In order for the United States military to be successful in assisting these governments to stabilize, gain strength, and work effectively, the citizens in the towns of these countries need to recognize that U.S. Soldiers have the ability, and the desire, to keep them secure. Similarly, the people in these towns need to be comfortable with U.S. Soldiers living and working in the immediate area and taking action to resolve security threats. The Army's ability to conduct kinetic operations is critical to Soldier survival on today's modern battlefield, but the struggle during COIN operations is to win the citizen; through action, information, or perception.

An example of a junior leader who understands the COIN environment is a company commander in Iraq who described the work and contributions with the Green Zone Council of the Iraqi Boy Scout Program having the effect of building rapport and relationships with the local citizens, forming a partnership in the community, elevating the local social climate, and influencing the Iraqi leaders of the future. This commander understands winning a COIN operation and stated, "It isn't sexy like doorkicking or

conducting a snatch-and-grab but.....my years have taught me some good lessons about effects-based operations rather than casualty-count based operations.”³

Today’s junior leader faces a number of threats, networks, and enemies, that can be camouflaged as a friendly and a productive part of a town and society in general. Through poor action or interaction with U.S. Soldiers, combined with the constant presence of bad influencers, the good citizen can change to become the enemy, emplacing Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) or gathering information on US Soldiers and units.

In this VUCA environment, each innovation or new technology that is put in place to defeat the enemy is answered with a new enemy tactic, technique, or procedure (TTP) to counter and defeat that new innovation or technology. TTPs are changing so quickly that the joint and Army institutional manuals are unable to keep the leaders in the field up to date, and are being replaced by websites, social networks and blogs.⁴ These new technologies have become a substitute so that junior leaders have access to the most up-to-date information as they conduct operations. Today’s enemy is adapting so quickly that it requires junior leaders to constantly scan the environment, recognize the changing battlefield, and adapt on the fly to meet each new challenge.

The enemy is much less of a template and more of a network of compartmentalized functions, operating under broad guidance, and receiving little in the way of oversight. This challenge makes it tougher to figure out the operations of one cell or network from another cell or network, which is also conducting insurgency operations, but may be operating using different TTPs in the very next town.⁵ Junior leaders of today must have a better understanding of the relationships within the

insurgent network they face, but also have a thorough grasp of how the particular network operates in the area where the unit has the responsibility to secure.

As an example, the typical IED network has a whole string of financiers, buyers, suppliers, movers, device makers, bomb assemblers, emplacements and executors. That network may cross several different clans, towns, cities or countries, in any of a number of directions in order to finally merge as a deadly device targeting U.S. Soldiers. Getting to one part of that network has the ability to slow the enemy, but unless leaders are able to take part of the problem and find and dismantle other parts of the network, that network will eventually regenerate in a new place, and continue with operations.⁶

Junior leaders today are faced with a different enemy, in a complex fight, against a decentralized and networked threat. The weapon systems of choice during the Cold War, the Abrams Tank, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer and Engineer FASCAM minefield, have been replaced with direct precision munitions, real time intelligence, sophisticated satellite communications, and overhead unmanned aerial vehicles that have the capability of watching both friendly and enemy action in live viewing. However, today's junior leaders also have a full range of non-lethal options that include biometric tools, professional civil affairs experts in agriculture, economics and governance that are part of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, bringing expertise and, in many cases, money, to bear on the problems a village could be facing.

The move from pencil and paper, prevalent through most of the Army during the Cold War, to a full range of advanced technologies like Blue Force Tracker, Tactical Satellite Radios and Counter Remote Electronic Warfare systems, help Soldiers to survive, provide constant situational awareness to leaders, and allow information to be

passed across the chain of command, in real time.⁷ Today's junior leader is more susceptible to information and data overload than ever before. The preponderance of the training in ROTC, USMA, and during the branch OBC is still focused on kinetic operations and tactics used to defeat the enemy. The training does not focus on interaction, winning the population, and influencing the citizenry to gain an ally ready to assist, not an adversary, ready to do harm.⁸ In this new era, there must be training added that will prepare the junior leaders with the skills and tools to assist them in winning in COIN operations.

Differences in Training. The Cold War trained junior leaders were taught to understand enemy order of battle which was composed of prescribed sizes of formations that would conduct prescribed military operations at prescribed intervals of time. If Cold War era leaders were able to recognize the enemy formation and when that formation arrived on the battlefield, there were prescribed actions to counter and defeat that enemy. Once the first echelon was defeated, there was a common understanding that the next echelon would arrive at the next prescribed time interval. This is the training methodology that was being conducted in the Army's Combat Training Centers (CTC) to train leaders at brigade level and below. Many junior leaders were provided products from intelligence officers that templated how to find and solve the problem. Checklists from the CTC and the Army Training and Evaluation Program were used to grade the standard for success or failure at the unit level.⁹

Training in lethality was also first and foremost in every unit's training cycle. Bradley and tank gunnery, individual weapon system precision on Table VIII, and the platoon or company maneuver live fires for record on Table XII, were how units and

junior leaders were graded. If a unit had good throughput on the range, ran things smoothly and had all of the fighting vehicles or tanks qualify as a “first time go” that was deemed a good unit. There was very little complexity to observing, locating, acquiring and firing on targets that were positioned on a static range to the unit’s front. The Army moved through the Cold War era with the premise that if the vehicles from each unit were able to identify, shoot and kill everything to their immediate front, the United States and NATO were going to survive the onslaught of Warsaw Pact forces coming into Europe through the Fulda Gap.¹⁰

The journey from yesterday’s Cold War junior leader to today’s COIN and Irregular Warfare junior leader started following Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf, took a dramatic turn after 9/11, and continues to evolve today. Although the Army needs a different junior leader than it did 20 years ago, the training and leader development of that junior leader has been slow to develop, and may not be providing today’s junior leader with all the appropriate skills or opportunities that would develop into the tools needed to be successful in today’s fight.

This deficiency has been recognized and addressed in the current Army Leader Development Strategy which commits to preparing leaders for both kinetic and non-kinetic threats in full spectrum operations to face the complexity junior leaders encounter in today’s fight.¹¹

The Army’s Leader Development Strategy states “Our adversaries will decentralize, network, and operate among the people to overcome our advantages. We are also decentralizing. As a result, at increasingly lower echelons, leaders must be able to string actions and activities together with their Joint Interagency Intergovernmental Multinational (JIIM) partners into campaigns. As we continue to modularize our force and to decentralize decision-making, we must adapt our strategy to develop leaders for this increased responsibility.”¹²

There are great differences between the junior leader of the Cold War and the junior leader in a post 9/11 world. New and greater levels of responsibility, technology and decentralization require the Army to adapt, in order to meet the demands of training and developing today's junior leader. The shortfalls that exist today in junior leader development require training, instruction, and programs that provide specialized skills in creative leadership, critical thinking, language proficiency and cultural competency. These skills can train the junior leader on how to think and are essential for leading decentralized units in irregular warfare or COIN operations. Junior leader development for units conducting decentralized operations is an important aspect for modifying the training necessary to give today's junior leader right skills to successfully lead in the uncertain and complex environment commonplace in today's fight.

Junior Leader Development during Decentralized Operations.

Army General Martin Dempsey, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Commander, stated that in order to combat the decentralization employment by the enemy, the Army must also decentralize and provide more decisionmaking power into the lower ranks. As those decisionmaking abilities and authorities are delegated down the ranks, it is the junior leader who must have the "on the scene" authority to act along within the guidelines from a higher headquarters, with an appropriate amount of latitude, that will permit the junior leader to analyze a particular situation and critically think and evaluate various courses of action before taking action.¹³

In an environment where the enemies are operating in a decentralized manner, U.S. Army formations are required to operate in the same fashion in order to confront and engage those enemies.¹⁴ One way to develop the enemy situation and have a better understanding of the civilian population is to live and interact in the environment

of the insurgent. Living among the populace is best accomplished at the lower echelons of Army units, at squad, platoon and company level instead of the higher levels at battalion, brigade, and division, where the leaders with the most Army experience and training would be found. This is the leader development challenge that the Army faces in decentralized operations. The Army must change and accelerate the level and type of leader development that is being provided to the junior leaders.¹⁵ These are among the least experienced leaders in the chain of command, yet, in order to be effective, junior leaders will see increased responsibility for decisionmaking and judgment at the level where Soldiers will interact with populations and confront enemy insurgents.

The decentralized operations that GEN Dempsey described are summed up by a Military Intelligence Commander who described his relationship and style of decentralized operations with his own subordinate leaders.

In my position, my HUMINT company will be scattered on the battlefield. All of my team leaders will have their own issues to deal with and some will work directly for a maneuver commander. They have to be resourceful and knowledgeable to support the various commands they will support. We place our trust in 18- to 23-year-olds to work above their pay grade, to be responsible and continue to set the standard for all to see. To be innovative in combat, it must first start at home. I have laid out guidance to my LTs and PSGs and am always surprised by the result.¹⁶

The New Army Leader Development Strategy describes a balance in the training, education, and experience of tactical and operational leaders. It requires that junior leaders will make decisions and take appropriate actions, both kinetic and non-kinetic, that will produce positive outcomes. Junior leaders must be capable of leading increasingly decentralized organizations, demonstrate competency in COIN operations, manage uncertainty, understand the complexity of the environment and be capable of moving to full spectrum operations as required. These changes support the Army's

leader development strategy by growing leaders who know how to think, not what to think.¹⁷

Critical thinking and creative leadership courses and training teach the junior leader on how to think, which is paramount in a VUCA environment. Critical thinking and creative leadership development competencies are crucial in COIN operations. Without these skills, junior leaders could be rendered ineffective without consistent oversight and guidance, while units could be slow to act in complex situations and fail to adapt when confronted in unclear circumstances.

Critical Thinking and Creative Leadership: Important Junior Leader Development Competencies

In a Washington Times editorial titled “Studying the Art of War”, Major General (Ret) Robert H. Scales stated,

Soldiers today can no longer just practice the science of killing in order to win. They must understand and be sensitive to alien cultures. They must be skilled in the art of peacekeeping and stability operations. ... Thus, in this new and unfamiliar era of conflict, the military must prepare soldiers to think critically and analytically much earlier in their careers.¹⁸

Critical thinking and decentralization are important concepts requiring a change in the Army training and education culture as the Army transforms junior leadership development. Complementing traditional Army training for junior officers with critical thinking skills will assist in adapting Army units to fight and win under conditions of complexity and uncertainty.¹⁹

Critical thinking helps the junior leader meet the complexities in a VUCA environment. When used, critical thinking and creative leadership help in the understanding of how a volatile situation can be made more stable. In uncertain environments, critical thinking adds certainty and promotes a level of calm and

confidence when outcomes cannot be known. These skills clear the ambiguous situation and bring simplicity to the complex problems facing junior leaders. Critical thinking is the kind of mental attitude necessary to be effective in the VUCA environment. Critical thinking is about learning how to think and how to judge and improve the quality of thinking, for the junior leader and the Soldiers they lead in Army units.²⁰

Creative leadership and critical thinking are skills that can be used at every level and rank of increasing responsibility throughout an entire career. The Army cannot decide to begin training creativity and critical thinking at the 10 year mark of experience when most field grade officers attend the Intermediate Level Education (ILE) Program. In terms of creative leadership and critical thinking skills, the Army must identify young officers who are capable of thinking outside of the box and begin to develop those skills early, while cadets are still in college, so that those attributes can be enhanced and matured throughout a career.

In order to better use critical thinking and creative leadership competencies, the junior leader must be able to communicate and understand the environment and culture where Army units are operating. The importance of language proficiency and cultural training are necessary for junior leaders to effectively communicate and operate, during decentralized missions, in a VUCA environment.

Language and Cultural Training: Important Junior Leader Development Competencies.

Following a request from General Stanley McChrystal, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander in Afghanistan, to deploy Soldiers with an enhanced language and cultural awareness capability, Fort Campbell launched a new training program to meet that need. The classes focus on basic listening and speaking

skills before moving on to more practical applications. A staff officer for GEN McChrystal stated that the COIN doctrine makes it absolutely essential to communicate with village elders about such things as governance, economics and security.²¹

Soldiers are trained in the basic phrases before learning "social, economic, and military vocabulary to assist them when partnering with and operating amongst the Afghan people." The intent of the course is to have junior leaders that are conversant in the local language beyond the customary greetings normally associated with language basic overview instruction. These junior leaders will have a skill that can be conveyed to the NCOs and Soldiers in the units they lead. The courses also focus on cultural awareness, to help junior leaders learn to avoid the cultural issues that could hinder their unit's ability to conduct operations.²²

A junior leader previously deployed to Afghanistan completed the language course and understands the importance that language training and proficiency has while deployed and operating decentralized among villagers.

Knowing how to communicate with Afghan civilians not only makes conducting operations there easier, but also helps build rapport with Afghan nationals." It is in the COIN environment that building relationships is the key to achieving success. "Every time I've dealt with a native speaker of a language, being able to express the simplest things in their tongue goes a long way in showing we are putting out an effort and trying to relate."²³

Other junior leaders describe the usefulness of knowing and understanding the local language. The ability to have a basic conversation with a local villager or a member of the Afghan Security Forces helps the junior leader gain personal confidence, while local villagers and Afghan citizens are appreciative of the effort. Because units spend a substantial amount of their time on patrol, and not necessarily fighting, leaders have the time to interact with the local populations. Leaders can learn what villagers

need, if they require assistance or food, if someone is sick, or if there have been problems in the area. When the language barrier is down, junior leaders are able to relate to the problems in the village and have found that the unit is able to get much more accomplished.²⁴

Learning a new language or studying a culture, enough to be proficient requires a great deal of time. Developing and exercising critical thinking and creative leadership skills is equally challenging. The POIs in ROTC and the branch OBC may touch on some parts of these subjects, but not to the level that a new junior leader is proficient. Finding opportunities where time could be made available to train these specialized junior leader development courses provides a possible solution for getting junior leaders to the battlefield with the requisite skills necessary for the fight.

The suggestion of junior leader training in critical thinking, creative leadership, language proficiency and cultural understanding is pointless if the time, resources and training opportunities are not made available to conduct the training. Opportunities are available and worthy of further Army study. Hard choices and tough decisions need to be made to mandate additional training and use available time more efficiently so that junior leaders have the necessary skills to lead and influence in today's VUCA environment.

Available Training Time for Junior Leader Development.

Training during College. It is time that the Army requires the successful completion of courses as part of an Army Officer contract, ROTC scholarship or commissioning as a new officer. Although the POI during ROTC provides basic tactics and officership training, the opportunities available for training future leaders while attending college institutions are being missed. Cadets with contracts or scholarships

could complete at least two years of a foreign language as part of their commissioning requirement. Additionally, elective courses in areas such as negotiations, creative leadership and critical thinking could be incorporated into the cadet's overall curriculum required prior to graduation and commissioning. Language courses are available at most every college, contribute as an elective credit toward an individual bachelor's degree, and could subsequently be used to assist the individual officer throughout the span of a career, while enhancing the unit's capabilities in the COIN fight of today and expected fights of the future. As an incentive, the Army already provides a monetary payment for service members that have a language proficiency skill.

Not all cadets will have the time or opportunity to complete these specialized courses prior to graduation and commissioning. Some cadets will carry a full course load throughout the undergraduate years in order to meet the demands of a particular degree. Others will just begin to come into the Army ROTC program as juniors in college, not always allowing enough time to meet the requirements. Following graduation, and before a junior officer finishes the branch OBC and reports into a new unit, there are some periods of time and opportunities available to conduct this training.

Training Opportunities: After Graduation and Before the Branch Basic Course.

Many newly commissioned junior leaders are spending several months, and up to a year waiting to attend their branch OBC.²⁵ This is frustrating to the new officer, who has finished college, has recently earned a bachelor's degree, but is bound to an "in-the-near-future" commitment of training and service. Newly commissioned officers are graduating from college and are ready to start their training and new duties as leaders in the Army. These junior officers may have trouble making a serious commitment to long-

term employment with a business or company while pending the commitment that was made to the Army and the Nation. Likewise, an employer may bring on a new graduate that is waiting to attend initial training, but would be more likely to find someone who does not have a future obligation that will leave an unfilled hole in the company.

The period of time immediately following graduation provides an excellent opportunity to get newly graduated and commissioned officers onto active duty in order to provide some of the training isn't part of the POI in the branch OBC. The new leader could report to an initial entry training location and begin coursework in language or cultural training, critical thinking, negotiations or creative leadership as part of this program. These courses could be provided as part of online instruction or contracted classroom training, through the installation education center. The junior leaders could be monitored by the branch OBC cadre to ensure compliance with the requirements and educational opportunities that are being provided.

There will be some junior leaders that move directly from graduation, to commissioning, to the branch OBC, and then straight onto an initial duty assignment, without having the opportunities to receive additional specialized training. The demands on a junior officer in the first duty assignment are greater than those imposed while going through training in a schoolhouse environment. However, there are periods in garrison, when the unit is not training, but rather in a supporting cycle that would allow for specialized training courses to be conducted.

Training Opportunities during Garrison. As junior leaders are deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, the COIN and Irregular Warfare environment require that operations are conducted in a decentralized configuration. New junior leaders are given more

responsibility, authority and are held accountable for more than ever before. Most take this added responsibility, authority and accountability, use learned and adapted creativity and critical thinking skills to succeed in each mission, exceed expectations and show an incredible amount of effectiveness in solving complex problems. These same junior leaders have proven themselves by sustaining a fast pace of operations, over long periods of time, while motivating Soldiers against complacency. Today's junior leaders have continued to deploy over and over again, in increasing positions of responsibility during a high OPTEMPO period of war, that has gone on longer than any other period in our Nation's history.

Sadly, it is during the periods of garrison either before or in between deployments, that so much of that responsibility, authority and accountability are stripped away from junior leaders due to garrison policies that force approval authorities to a higher level.²⁶ Somehow, a junior officer can run a dismounted combat patrol in an area of known insurgents or lead a convoy escort mission along known areas of IED activity in Iraq, but when the unit arrives back to garrison, that same junior leader needs a higher level commander, officer or leader for training missions with far less danger, impact, and complexity. The junior leader knows that this is nonsense, a waste of valuable time, and a point of disgruntlement resulting from forced micromanagement due to garrison regulations. Many hours are wasted because garrison policies or Army level mandatory training events require a junior officer's oversight or presence. Changing garrison regulations and authority levels allow these opportunities to be captured and used more effectively for training junior leaders with a full range of skills that will provide more tools for the toolkit.

The junior leader will have time to focus on some of individual training in areas such as language skills, cultural awareness, critical thinking and creative leadership. This time can also be used by the junior leader to study a future area of operations where the unit will be expected to operate. An in depth study that includes the enemy trends, successes, failures, and the lessons learned from previous units and leaders in a particular area, would be beneficial to the junior leader and the unit preparing to deploy. The junior leader has to be fully engaged long before deploying into the country.

Summary and Conclusion.

Junior leaders need to arrive at a first duty unit ready to hit the streets in Iraq and Afghanistan, effectively lead units in the VUCA environment, and operate as decentralized parts of a greater and overall higher headquarters mission. On the ground at the junior leader level, important decisions and judgments are made which are vital to defeat the insurgencies and win the citizens in the villages that Army units secure. In order to meet the high demands on today's battlefield, junior leader development and training must be enhanced and changed to provide junior leaders with the necessary skills needed for this fight.

The enemy and the fight has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War era and the Army's training regimen and methodology has to change along with it. To operate in the villages of Iraq and Afghanistan, junior leaders must be confident and skilled in their ability to communicate with the local citizens. Junior leaders must have a thorough understanding of the customs, courtesies and culture of the region, while being able to appropriately connect to those leaders that have power and influence in the village.

Because of the complex environment that Army units operate, junior leaders must be educated, trained, and exercised in critical thinking and creative leadership skills. These skills allow the junior leader to think through the complex problems they face each day while adapting to the uncertain environment where Army units live and work. Study of the history and the region, an understanding of the historical successes and failures in a particular area throughout history, along with the most recent After Action Reviews from previous units are all fundamental requirements necessary to give each junior leader the edge needed to be effective and successful at leading and safeguarding the Nation's treasure, great American Soldiers.

Because the POIs for ROTC and the branch OBC are already full and focus primarily on basic kinetic tactics and officership skills, the Army must find time and training opportunities to add these new junior leader development competencies. As part of a commissioning requirement the Army could mandate additional or specific course completion requirements while cadets are still attending undergraduate studies at a college, university or West Point. Opportunities following college graduation and before training begins at the branch OBC provide ample time for additional regional study or language and cultural training courses. Lastly, garrison duty affords junior leaders time to meet these important and demanding requirements, while the day-to-day taskings and chores that tend to dominate large periods of time could be delegated to a lower echelon of authority.

Today's junior leader faces an incredible challenge and the Army can do better to train the junior leaders for the VUCA environment of Iraq and Afghanistan. Through eight years of war the junior leader has proven the capability to adapt, overcome, and

rise to the test, even with training shortfalls. It is time for the Army to institutionalize new training competencies that fully prepare today's junior leader for today's fight.

Endnotes

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